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New York

Chairman: Mr. Sychou ..... (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 60 to 81 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairman: Before calling on the first speaker, I would like to convey to all delegations my best wishes for a memorable United Nations Day.

Mr. Abuah (Nigeria): Let me extend to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the other members of the Bureau my delegation's congratulations on your election. I am confident that thanks to your well-known diplomatic skill, Sir, our efforts at this session will be crowned with success. My delegation pledges its cooperation with you. Let me also extend our gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia, who successfully guided our deliberations during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

It will be recalled that only a few weeks ago, the General Assembly at its fiftieth session voted in large numbers for the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) which was negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. In spite of many procedural problems and difficult substantive issues surrounding the Treaty's negotiation there, many nations were able to sign the Treaty. For our part, as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria indicated in plenary meeting earlier this month, we hope to sign the Treaty in due course. All this is remarkable. It reflects the conviction of the international community that the Treaty holds out the distinct hope of contributing to our collective commitment to a safer, more secure and nuclear-weapon-free world. The Treaty has imposed on the nuclear-weapon States in particular the unique responsibility of joining with the rest of humankind in working for a complete end to all forms of nuclear-weapons testing.

To this end, we welcome the recommendations of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons as a step in the right direction. With that Australian initiative, international consensus on the need for the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the horror of such weapons is growing. Only recently, the International Court of Justice, in its ruling on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, concluded that:

> "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, under strict and effective international control". (*A/51/4, para. 182*).

The urgency of the message of this ruling cannot now be underestimated.

This trend is captured in the Programme of Action for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, contained in Conference on Disarmament document CD/1419, which was submitted last August to the Conference on Disarmament by the Group of 21 on behalf of 28 members of the Conference on Disarmament, including Nigeria. Similarly, this group of countries has called on the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. It should be recalled in this regard that the General Assembly at its fiftieth session

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mandated the Conference on Disarmament, in resolution 50/70 P of December 1995, to establish such a committee on a priority basis. In our view, the difficulties which prevented consensus adoption of the Group of 21 proposal on the establishment of the committee should now give way so that work can begin in earnest in the Conference on Disarmament on multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

The measures that are urgent and pressing within the nuclear disarmament process have been spelt out in the Group of 21 Programme of Action. In this connection, we wish to reiterate that a multilaterally negotiated and legally binding instrument should be such as to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. It must be said that adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) by the non-nuclear-weapon States constitutes the bedrock on which the nuclear non-proliferation regime has been built. This group of countries supported the decision on the CTBT in spite of its imperfections, and many of them have even signed the Treaty. By doing so, they have helped to endow the Treaty with much-needed legitimacy. Furthermore, it must be restated that the non-nuclear-weapon States have continued to make every effort towards the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world, including through the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Under the Pelindaba Treaty for instance, Africa has forsworn the nuclear-weapon option. The commitment of these States, as well as that of the States of other regions, should induce a matching commitment from the nuclear-weapon States to cooperate with the rest of humankind to put an end to pervasive insecurity arising from the continued possession of nuclear weapons.

Regarding the imminent entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, my delegation cannot but express dismay that the two major holders of the world's stocks of chemical weapons have yet to ratify the Convention. Outstanding issues remain on the implementation of article XI of the Convention which, *inter alia*, seeks to assure developing States parties that implementation of the Convention would not unnecessarily jeopardize their development. These issues need to be addressed in order to ensure fuller compliance with the Treaty and to promote its universality.

The problem of anti-personnel landmines is a continuing source of concern for the international community. Africa is one of the regions of the world this is worst hit. Nigeria therefore supports the various initiatives aimed at ridding the world of the scourge of these weapons. We hail those countries that have undertaken to stop the production and export of some types of landmines. We welcome the improvement made in the relevant Protocols of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects. We join all appeals and actions aimed at banning this particularly inhumane weapon. In the meantime, the United Nations should explore additional ways of granting both technical and humanitarian assistance to countries affected by landmines. Those countries with relevant demining technology and capacity should be encouraged to continue to extend their assistance in this regard.

With regard to conventional weapons in general, we are encouraged by the conclusion reached by the Disarmament Commission in its Guidelines for international arms transfers. We call upon the major arms producers and exporters to respect these guidelines and to desist from resorting to unilateral measures.

The United Nations disarmament agenda and the mechanisms for promoting it should continue to retain our attention. In the past few years, the General Assembly has considered the need to convene a fourth special session devoted to disarmament to revitalize the disarmament agenda in the context of the post-cold-war world and to identify the modalities for achieving the priorities. Such a special session becomes all the more necessary as the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission vacillate on their future agenda. For instance, at the 1996 session of the Disarmament Commission, my delegation noted that agreement could not be reached on an item on nuclear disarmament; the case in the Conference on Disarmament was similar. We should be able to agree on the need to reconcile group priority concerns in the larger interest of the world community. The problem of the timing of such a special session should not obfuscate its purpose.

Mr. Chkheidze (Georgia): This is the first statement that I have made during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, so allow me on behalf of my delegation to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. My delegation is pleased to see you in the Chair, and certainly looks forward to close cooperation with you and with all the other members of the Bureau.

This year was, without doubt, marked by an event of overriding importance. Two and a half years of strenuous negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) successfully came to a close. Georgia became a signatory of the CTBT on 24 September 1996. The President of Georgia, Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, in his statement of 23 September 1996, expressed the hope

> "that this Treaty will strongly impact the peace process, leading to nuclear non-proliferation and the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons on our planet." (*A/51/412, annex*)

We believe that our joint creative efforts will eliminate all those obstacles that are now in the way of the Treaty's entry into force. Every State must be assured that its national security is no longer threatened. We are confident that the nuclear Powers will continue their efforts to secure a safe planet for posterity.

My country attaches great importance to the control of conventional weapons and the prevention of illicit trafficking in such weapons. The tragic events in Abkhazia, Georgia, were in many respects spawned by the absence of adequate mechanisms against these evil trends. The paucity of control mechanisms to prevent the traffic in conventional weapons has been conducive to the aggressive policy of the separatists as well as to the ensuing genocide of the Georgian population in the region. A number of towns and villages have been razed by modern missiles, shells and other military technology, which had been procured by illegal military groups and which are still concentrated in the territory under their control. Clans of illegal arms dealers, who naturally oppose any kind of peace process, have been formed.

Under the ineffective international system of control, the so-called white spots, where weapons remain unregistered, have become true centres for the full spectrum of criminal activities. We are encountering serious problems in controlling the illicit arms traffic at the national level. The decision adopted within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States, annexed to document A/51/62, regarding the political and economic isolation of the separatist region, and the related decree issued by the President of Georgia, annexed to document S/1996/240, need international support and the implementation of concrete measures.

We believe that the monitoring of the illicit flow and use of weapons must be included in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations. The time has also come for this question to be addressed in relevant reports, in order to determine the source of the crime and to take effective measures for its prevention. We also believe that the problem of the illicit traffic in and use of weapons should be considered as inseparable from the problems of the traffic in narcotic drugs, terrorism and gross violations of human rights.

A global ban on anti-personnel landmines is a very important issue for my Government. As is well known, more than 110 million landmines exist today in about 70 States, mainly developing countries. We are all very well aware of the horrifying statistics showing the numbers of people killed, crippled and injured by these dangerous devices. In Georgia, the Abkhaz separatists have laid a significant number of landmines, causing serious casualties among the civilian population, as well as among United Nations military observers, who, under the circumstances, have been compelled to shut down three important stations in the Gali region.

The constant threat to the lives of international observers and the civilian population prevents the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia from fully implementing its mandate and seriously hampers the process of the return of hundreds of thousands of refugees who are now scattered throughout Georgia. Today we are facing the serious problem of demining. Its resolution would significantly strengthen the international monitoring of the conflict and its peaceful settlement.

In April 1996 Georgia acceded to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects. The Parliament of Georgia is now working on the ratification of amended Protocol II and Protocol IV of the Convention. The question of declaring a moratorium on the use of landmines is also under serious consideration. We welcome the proposal put forward by the delegation of Canada that an international agreement banning anti-personal mines be signed by the end of 1997.

The future plans for action in the field of disarmament are promising and important. As regards the proposed fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, we believe that its convening will be appropriate only in the event that the issues it is to discuss are agreed upon by consensus. Otherwise, we will have to face unwanted delays and contradictions.

The Chairman: I call on the President of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Ludwik Dembinski of Poland.

Mr. Dembinski (Poland), President of the Conference on Disarmament: Allow me at the outset, Sir, to extend to you my warm congratulations on your election to the high office of Chairman of this important Committee, and to wish you every success in the discharge of your responsibilities. My congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau who assist you in your tasks.

I am addressing the Committee in my capacity as President of the Conference on Disarmament in order to present to the First Committee the report of the Conference on its work during the 1996 session. The report is contained in document A/51/27, which is before the Committee.

As indicated in that report, at its very first plenary meeting of the 1996 session, the Conference on Disarmament adopted its agenda, and, in response to the call of the international community as contained in resolution 50/65, which was adopted without a vote by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, re-established its Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban to

> "conclude, as a task of the highest priority, a universal and multilaterally and effectively verifiable comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty which contributes to nuclear disarmament and the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects, so as to enable its signature by the outset of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly". (*resolution 50/65, para. 2*)

As a consequence, the Conference devoted its undivided attention and energy to elaborating a draft comprehensive test-ban treaty. Throughout this session, which was long and arduous but ultimately rewarding, the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, under the able and effective Chairmanship of Ambassador Jaap Ramaker of the Netherlands, painstakingly pursued our goal with the dedication and goodwill of all delegations in order to discharge our mandate in timely fashion. These efforts were crowned with success, with the decision taken by the General Assembly on 10 September to adopt the draft comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty (CTBT) and to request the Secretary-General to open it for signature.

I believe that we can take legitimate satisfaction from the fact that some 125 Governments have already signed the Treaty, and that preparatory work for its entry into force is already under way. The significance of this Treaty for our collective efforts in the promotion of non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and, ultimately, international peace and security, cannot be overemphasized, and it is hoped that this achievement will constitute a significant step in our efforts to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and to pave the way for the progressive elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Conference on Disarmament can also take satisfaction in the fact that the long-overdue issue of the expansion of its membership has finally been resolved. Thanks to the determined efforts of all, the membership of the Conference was expanded by 23 members. As a result, the Conference on Disarmament has now become a more balanced and representative negotiating body of the international community, and is thus better prepared to deal with the complex challenges of the post-cold-war security environment. However, as the Committee is aware, a number of applications for membership of the Conference are still pending. Bearing in mind the fact that, in conformity with the rules of procedure of the Conference, its membership will be reviewed at regular intervals, and in accordance with the decision taken by the Conference, I have already started the process of consultations with all members on a future expansion of the Conference and I shall report to the Conference, on Disarmament on their outcome at the beginning of the 1997 session.

During the course of its 1996 session, the Conference also addressed the complex issue of its future agenda. With the successful conclusion of negotiations on the CTBT and the removal of the item on a nuclear-test ban from the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, the Conference will now turn its attention to the elaboration of a new substantive agenda. The consultations undertaken so far on this issue clearly indicate that the current agenda of the Conference on Disarmament requires reform and updating.

It is now accepted that the Conference on Disarmament should elaborate a new agenda that could boldly reflect the changes that have occurred in the last few years and strike a balance between nuclear and conventional items, and that the focus should remain on substantive negotiations and discussions. In this respect, I have already started consultations to build on the efforts of my predecessors with a view to developing a basis for consensus on the issue of nuclear disarmament, as well as to explore the possibility of reactivating all the ad hoc committees that did not resume work in 1996, including that dealing with the issue of a fissile material cut-off.

I am confident that the outcome of the deliberations of the First Committee will provide a sound political basis for our common endeavours, and that it will contribute to laying the foundations for a renewed direction and sense of purpose in the Conference on Disarmament for the future. For my part, and with the cooperation of all members of the Conference, I shall spare no effort to seek ways and means to set the stage for a smooth and effective start to the 1997 session.

It only remains for me to express my deep gratitude to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, to the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail and to their very small team of dedicated staff for their continued valuable support and assistance to the Conference.

The Chairman: The Committee takes note of the report of the Conference on Disarmament as contained in document A/51/27.

Mr. Nsangou (Cameroon): As this is the first time my delegation has addressed the First Committee at the fifty-first session, permit me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee and all the members of the Bureau on their election. I am confident that your wide experience will enable you to guide our efforts to a successful end. I assure you of the support and cooperation of the Cameroon delegation.

I also wish to express our gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia, for his able guidance of the First Committee at the fiftieth session.

For the first time since the dawn of the nuclear age, a Treaty banning all nuclear explosions has been concluded. The adoption of General Assembly resolution 50/245 of 10 September 1996 on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is a truly historic development and a major step towards ending the nuclear-arms age. The people of the world, including the United Nations, can take justified credit for the prominent role they played in making it possible. Cameroon is in the process of joining other signatories in acceding to this Treaty.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is on the verge of entering into force as, we hope, an additional State will soon ratify it. Cameroon is neither a producer nor a user of chemical weapons, yet my country was delighted to host the second African seminar on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention at Yaoundé from 13-15 February, 1995. In his welcoming statement, Mr. Ferdinand Leopold Oyono, the Minister of Foreign Relations of Cameroon promised the international community that Cameroon would do everything possible to be among the 65 ratifiers of this Convention, which Mr. Oyono himself signed on 14 January 1993 at Paris to enable it to enter into force. And today it is done. I am pleased to announce to the members of this Committee that Cameroon is the sixty-fourth ratifier of this Convention. The instrument of ratification was deposited with the Secretary-General on 16 September 1996, as announced in the *Journal* of the United Nations on 18 September 1996. My delegation is calling on all peace-loving nations, in particular those countries that are storing huge quantities of this deadly weapon, to come forward and ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention.

My delegation is of the conviction that the effective functioning of the United Nations Centres for Peace and Disarmament can greatly enhance regional disarmament efforts. From this perspective, therefore, my delegation is calling on the international community to give both material and moral support to the existing United Nations Regional Centre in Africa, Asia and Latin America to enable them to function effectively. In Africa, the Regional Centre can play a valuable role in promoting wider understanding and support for United Nations peace and arms-restraint measures at a time when the continent is confronted by many conflicts, leading to escalating arms acquisition in the region.

Cameroon is pleased with the accelerating worldwide trend towards the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. The signing of the Cairo Declaration on 11 April 1996, formally establishing the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone through the Pelindaba Treaty, reflects the genuine aspirations of the Governments and peoples of Africa to be free of nuclear insecurity.

My delegation also lauds the conclusion in December 1995 of the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, which could enhance peace and security in that zone. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in these regions, in addition to those in Latin America and the Caribbean under the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the South Pacific under the Treaty of Rarotonga, demonstrates the genuine interest of the peoples in those regions to live in peace and security. My delegation supports efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in the Middle East and other regions where the appropriate conditions exist.

The creation by the United Nations of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa has helped greatly to reinforce confidence-building measures among the peoples of the 11 States of the subregion. One of the greatest achievements of this Standing Advisory Committee was the organization of the first summit of Heads of State or Government of member countries, held in July 1996 at Yaoundé.

During this summit, the Heads of State or Governments signed a non-aggression pact among the States of the subregion and also expressed their willingness to make appropriate arrangements for its effective implementation. Yesterday, my head of State, President Paul Biya, formally received from Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the original signed text of the pact, as Cameroon is the depository State. They also considered problems relating to peace and security in the subregion, in accordance with the recommendations of the ministerial meeting of that Committee.

The Heads of State or Governments further stressed the urgent need for States in the subregion to establish, encourage and sustain participatory systems of governance as a means of preventing conflicts. They also underscored the necessity to organize, under the auspices of the United Nations, training seminars for officers in the armed forces, republican guards, gendarmerie and police forces of their subregion in order to promote a culture of peace by explaining the role of these forces in a democratic context.

My delegation wishes to express its deep appreciation to the Government of Japan in particular for its generous contribution to the trust fund to finance the work of the Committee. The Governments of Committee member States welcome this gesture of support, which in fact constitutes a confidence-building measure. We appeal to all other members of the United Nations to lend their support to our efforts to prevent future conflicts in this tension-ridden part of our world.

The proliferation of small arms, especially in developing countries, is a source of increased tension. My delegation welcomes the creation by the General Assembly of a panel of Government experts on small arms, established pursuant to resolution 50/70 B, and whose first workshop was held in South Africa in September this year.

My delegation is appealing to the international community to assist regions or subregions affected by that threat to find practical solutions to prevent the excessive accumulation and transfer of light weapons and small arms, a phenomenon that not only endangers peace and security, but also hampers the economic development of the affected countries.

Cameroon is seriously concerned about the proliferation of anti-personnel landmines, which indiscriminately maim and kill innocent men, women and children and produce massive social suffering in areas of conflict. My delegation welcomes the Ottawa Declaration recently issued at the International Strategy Conference, held at Ottawa from 3 to 5 October, which commits 48 Governments, including several from Africa, to work together to ensure the earliest possible conclusion of a legally binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines. My delegation hopes that the proposed agreement will take into consideration such humanitarian aspects as the rehabilitation of societies and communities victimized by landmines.

My delegation will support any initiative taken by the international community against this deadly weapon because, to borrow the words of President Clinton:

> "Our children deserve to walk on earth in safety". *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 6th meeting, p. 3)*

My delegation fully supports this statement.

The post-cold-war period is in the throes of a major, often tumultuous, transition. There is a need for tolerance and mutual understanding on the part of all States.

Mr. Tanç (Turkey): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, warmly Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I am confident that, under your wise and able leadership, this Committee will be successfully guided through its challenging agenda. I would also like to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun, and to extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

The challenges and risks we face in the military security field call for measures that are commensurately broad in scope and application. This feature alone underscores the unique mandate, as well as the moral and material authority, of the United Nations to address those challenges in all their global dimensions.

As regards arms control and disarmament, curbing the alarming trend in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and technologies for their means of delivery

must remain high on our agenda. The structure that complements the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the field of nuclear non-proliferation has been strengthened with the successful conclusion and opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Turkey is pleased to have joined the overwhelming majority of nations in efforts to conclude and adopt the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Our close association with these efforts stems from our standing policy to take an active part in regional and global initiatives to address proliferation issues as a member State of the Conference on Disarmament. The Treaty represents an optimal reconciliation of interests and constitutes an indispensable step towards the eventual goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The first CTBT Preparatory Commission, which is due to start its work on 20 November of this year, clearly marks the beginning of a new process towards implementing the CTBT. At this juncture, we cannot overemphasize the importance of the ratification by all 44 countries of this essential instrument. Turkey is willing and ready to take on new responsibilities for the full implementation of the Treaty and hopes that the same positive approach will be adopted by all the countries concerned. It is the view of this delegation that countries that did not sign the CTBT, but expressed willingness to attend the first Preparatory Commission as observers, should be permitted to do so. After all, we want to make the Treaty a globally adhered-to instrument. We believe that a receptive attitude can only increase the stature and global authority of the CTBT.

The Conference on Disarmament has to be commended, and not only for fulfilling the expectations of the international community by concluding the CTBT before the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. It should also be commended for its success in revitalizing itself by adopting a historical decision to expand its membership. The expansion of the Conference on Disarmament provided an accurate reflection of the new international conditions in the field of disarmament and arms control. We believe that the new composition of the Conference on Disarmament with 23 new members, Turkey among them, strengthened the universality and enhanced the representativity of that forum by placing the institution at par with post-cold-war realities.

Although the CTBT was not agreed upon by all members of the Conference on Disarmament, it is an undeniable fact that the Treaty was the result of intense negotiations conducted by all its member States. This forum, along with Australia's efforts, deserves the utmost appreciation and praise.

It is beyond any doubt that, in the period ahead, the Conference on Disarmament will play an important role in disarmament efforts. In this respect, we hope that the current work of the Conference on Disarmament to update its agenda in order to meet the expectations and needs of the international community, will bear fruit shortly. Within the framework of contemporizing its work, we expect the Conference to adopt a progressive and realistic agenda that would be conducive to consensus-building among member States. Turkey is of the opinion that the Conference's agenda should strike a balance between nuclear and conventional arms issues.

We also believe that the Conference on Disarmament should activate the Ad Hoc Committee, that was mandated early last year to negotiate a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in 1997. While pursuing a multifaceted disarmament objective, we should be mindful of the international community's aspiration to realize the goal of nuclear disarmament.

I would like to turn now to the fundamental role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Turkey is committed to strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of the agency's safeguards system through Programme "93+2". We view the establishment of the Committee, that has been charged by the Board of Governors with drafting a model protocol as a necessary and useful step towards significantly increasing the IAEA capacity to detect undeclared nuclear activity.

The Director General of IAEA, Mr. Hans Blix, as depository of the International Convention on Nuclear Safety, announced on 29 July that he had received the necessary number of ratifications from States for the Convention to enter into force. Turkey, being one of the 25 countries that has submitted the instrument of ratification, views that important development as a major step towards strengthening international cooperation in the safety field and towards creating a truly international safety culture. I would like to remind the Committee that the Convention officially enters into force today.

The proliferation of any type of weapon of mass destruction constitutes a serious threat to international peace

and security. The Chemical Weapons and Biological Weapons Conventions are significant international instruments that demonstrate the will of the international community to free the world from these types of weapons. The non-proliferation regimes on weapons of mass destruction are vital for a safer world. However, there is an equally compelling need to strengthen these regimes by adding legally binding verification procedures.

With this in mind, we have resolutely supported strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention with additional verification provisions. However, we are disappointed that an intergovernmental Ad Hoc Group established to produce proposals to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention completed its fifth and final session in Geneva on 27 September without finalizing its work. We hope that the international community will pursue its efforts to provide verification measures to strengthen the Convention.

Turkey views the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) as one of the cornerstones of European security and stability. The disagreements on the new definition of the flank rule was resolved at the CFE Review Conference held in May this year. We urge all the State Parties to the Treaty to confirm their approval of the Final Document of the Review Conference before the year's end. The entry into force of the Final Document, the reaffirmation of its validity and the States Parties' full and strict adherence to its agreed goals and objectives are of paramount importance. The intention is to launch an improved implementation process in which the changes in the security environment of Europe are fully reflected. The leading force that will steer this process is the preservation of the Treaty's *acquis*, that provide better security assurances for all the State Parties. We would like to remind the Committee that the success of this process heavily relies on the strict adherence of States to the existing Treaty provisions until the amended provisions enter into force.

All States are duty-bound to seek a solution to the human tragedy caused by anti-personnel landmines. However, it has become apparent that during this process, certain proposals seem to lack the necessary sensitivity to diverse regional security realities. The revised Protocol II on landmines, amended on 3 May 1996, annexed to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects, is the result of an agreement reached following lengthy negotiations. Time is needed for States Parties to ratify Protocol II as amended and for new States to become Party to the Convention and its Protocols. While Turkey fully shares the objective of banning the use of anti-personnel landmines, it favours an appropriately longer term calendar in the implementation process of achieving this ultimate goal.

All these proposals aimed at banning anti-personnel landmines share a common loophole. Regrettably, they do not address the crucial issue of how the international community would manage controlling the landmines that are in the hands of terrorist organizations. Turkey, fully aware of the threats posed by landmines in the hands of terrorist organizations and issues related to the humanitarian aspects of these deadly devices, is of the view that all progress in this field should reflect the consensus of the international community simply for the sake of complete applicability and implementation.

The Middle East is especially important for my country in the context of the need to broaden the scope of arms-control and other security-building endeavours to embrace all the regions of the world.

In the wider context of the Middle East, we are concerned about the impasse which we hope will be temporary in the Middle East peace process. As a strong supporter of the peace process, which we regard as the only viable option for the region, we genuinely desire to see it pick up momentum.

One of the main obstacles blocking the path to a comprehensive peace in the Middle East continues to be terrorism. It must be eliminated if the quest for a lasting peace is to prevail. We advocate and stand ready to take part in enhanced cooperation on the bilateral, regional and international levels. Similarly, we expect all countries to do their share to this end.

As a Balkan country, we firmly believe that peace, justice and legitimacy in the Balkans remain vital for international peace and stability. We hold the view that any cooperative scheme in the Balkans should include all and exclude none. We are actively participating in the implementation of the military and civilian aspects of the Dayton peace Agreement and in the international efforts to reconstruct and rehabilitate Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are also participating with several countries in a programme to train and equip the army of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to provide the Federation with the means to preserve its territorial integrity and to ensure military parity.

We welcome the recently held elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We consider the realization of these elections, despite the hardships, to be an important development for that country. We hope that this development will lead to the creation of a positive political climate conducive to the attainment of lasting peace and stability and to the establishment of the constitutional, legislative, administrative and security structures of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Today, the exchange of information on arms trade and export controls for dual-use technologies are becoming complex and comprehensive in nature. To a large extent, the exchange of information and export controls remain at the regional level. Due to its previously mentioned adverse features, the mechanism of transparency in armaments, established for global adherence, falls short of its intended objective. In line with the relevant resolutions, the parties should make every effort to pursue negotiations aimed at improving the existing system of transparency and to avoid duplication with other related arrangements. While engaging in these negotiations, it is crucial to be mindful of the direct connections that exists between arms transfer and terrorism.

The accumulation of conventional weapons beyond legitimate defence needs is inherently destabilizing. Devising responsible polices to be globally adhered to in arms transfers, with due regard to the impact of such transfers on regional and international stability, is no less a priority. We should ensure that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms becomes a more effective tool for monitoring and transparency in transfers. On a parallel track, the international community must vigorously pursue a more concerted effort to eradicate illicit arms trafficking, not solely as an arms and export-control measure, but, more importantly, as a key component in the international fight against terrorism.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate our sincere desire to see the fifty-first session of the General Assembly become an important milestone on the road to the next millennium. We have to gather our strength, pool our resources and ignite our imagination collectively to build a better and arms free world.

The Chairman: I now call on the Permanent Observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Martino (Holy See): May I extend my congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of this important Committee. I also wish to extend best wishes to the other members of the Bureau.

It is with a profound sense of hope that I address the Committee this year. This hope is rooted in the efforts of the international community in recent months in favour of nuclear disarmament. This is an important contribution to what Pope John Paul II advocated in his memorable visit to the United Nations last fall:

> "The answer to the fear which darkens human existence at the end of the century is the common effort to build a civilization of love, founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice and liberty." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, 20th Plenary Meeting, p. 6.)*

In 1995, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was indefinitely extended on the basis of a set of principles, including systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons. A review process with annual preparatory meetings, starting in 1997, was set in place.

Then, last September, the General Assembly adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which, if ratified, would end nuclear-weapons testing. On 24 September, I signed the Treaty on behalf of the Holy See, with the declaration that the Holy See is convinced that, in the sphere of nuclear weapons, the banning of tests and of the further development of these weapons, disarmament and non-proliferation are closely linked and must be achieved as quickly as possible under effective international controls.

Furthermore, the Holy See understands that these are steps towards general and total disarmament, which the international community as a whole should accomplish without delay.

This progress in achieving nuclear disarmament is augmented by the swelling support of people throughout the world for moving more decisively towards the abolition of nuclear weapons. The Holy See, which has always promoted nuclear disarmament, sees in all this activity signs of hope.

International law is the cornerstone of global security in an increasingly interdependent world. We thus cannot afford to disregard the admonition of the International Court of Justice. The obligation under article VI of the

NPT to pursue in good faith negotiations on nuclear disarmament goes beyond that of a mere obligation of conduct. As the Court has pointed out, the obligation involved here is an obligation to achieve a precise result: nuclear disarmament in all its aspects.

The Holy See would like to invite all States to review their positions in the light of these recent developments. It is not possible to postpone indefinitely the setting of guidelines through a programme to drive the process inexorably towards the elimination of nuclear weapons at the earliest possible time.

The great effort under way to accomplish nuclear disarmament can be viewed in terms of preventive diplomacy, that is, developing mutual confidence and good faith and taking actions to reduce the likelihood of conflict between States. The international community, through the tragic experience of the plethora of wars and conflicts in the twentieth century, which have killed more than 100 million people, must have learned by now that conflict prevention is a far cheaper alternative to dealing with the results of a conflict.

In this context, it is important to recall that all the wars and domestic conflicts that have taken place since the end of the Second World War have been fought almost exclusively with conventional weapons. Indeed, while arms control negotiations have reflected on questions of the proliferation of high-technology weapons, the hard fact is that most of the conflicts — and, let us be quite explicit, most of the killing and slaughter on a massive scale — has been done with low-technology armaments.

It is now urgent for the family of nations and the United Nations itself to face more decisively the magnitude of this question, which constitutes a major problem for the life and security of people in all our societies. Small arms, in particular, play a significant role not only in wars, terrorism and internal conflicts, but also in the area of organized or local crime, which creates a growing insecurity among citizens who, in turn, resort to arming themselves, contributing, as it were, to a vicious circle of violence and insecurity.

The Holy See welcomes the initiatives already taken by the United Nations in the area of conventional arms transfers. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, for example, despite its limited scope, at least to date, clearly shows a recognition of the fact that the entire family of nations has a legitimate interest in the question of the movement of conventional arms. But still more must be done, even to arrive at truly comprehensive and reliable information concerning conventional arms transfers. The information that is known or is knowable should be better coordinated and analyzed to make the map of conventional arms transfers more detailed. Greater international cooperation among law enforcement agencies should also be envisaged, because the illegal movement of arms is all too often linked to mercenary operations, terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking and other destabilizing activities.

There is still, however, a lack of international consensus concerning a clear framework of rules that can be fairly, consistently and effectively enforced in this area. At times, economic pressures to sell arms at times still dominate. But in an area where no one single arms transfer can ever be considered morally indifferent, arms transfers cannot be left solely to the law of the market.

The family of nations must also devote more attention and study to the question of why arms are bought and which security needs, real or created, are involved in such decisions. As a recent Holy See document on the subject stressed, the future well-being of any State depends far more on the integral development of its people than on its stock of arms. Yet in today's world, even among poorer nations, it still occurs that expenditure on armaments exceeds that on education and social development.

The path towards progress in eliminating the illicit transfer and use of conventional arms is a long one. But some steps are especially urgent. A first such step is that of the prohibition of all arms that are considered excessively injurious and which are thus subject to international humanitarian law. The Holy See, along with a growing number of States, has explicitly stated its desire to see a comprehensive ban on the production, use, export and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines. It hopes that the initiatives of the United Nations, and of individual Governments that have taken a special lead in this area will receive growing support. States cannot ignore the rising chorus of voices giving expression to the conscientious sentiments of so many citizens on this issue.

While all instruments of war in a world desperately in need of the goods and services of peace are deplorable, our hearts must go out to the ever-increasing number of victims of anti-personnel landmines. Nearly 70 countries are still littered with 100 million landmines, which cause 500 deaths or injuries a week, most often among civilians and, especially, among children. Incredibly, while landmines are being cleared, new ones are being planted. In addition to the humanitarian toll, the social and economic costs of mine

pollution are enormous. Farming, commerce, development, travel and play are all hindered where landmines are present.

Again, the Holy See calls for an end to this cruelty. A global ban on the production and use of landmines is long overdue. Many nations have called for an immediate and comprehensive ban on landmines. There is no excuse for nations to refuse to make this a universal approach. At the same time, we must be vigilant so as to avoid the emergence of new forms of inhumane weapons, such as certain laser weapons that would permanently blind adversaries, and indeed large sectors of the civilian non-combatant population.

Let us use all our knowledge and the tools of new technologies — in communications, transportation, science and prolongation of life — to build the conditions for peace. Working to prevent wars must be seen as an indisputable contribution not just to alleviating conflict but also to preparing the soil for the new flowers of peace to bloom in the next millennium.

Mr. Kunda (Zambia): Since I am speaking for the first time in this Committee, allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your unanimous election. My delegation is confident that under your able leadership the Committee will accomplish its task successfully. We therefore pledge our unqualified support to you and to other members of the Bureau in the task ahead.

The general debate on disarmament and international security takes place this year against the backdrop of a number of significant developments in the field of disarmament. These include the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) last year, which was complemented by the adoption last month of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which has since been opened for signature. Zambia is currently making arrangements to sign the Treaty despite its shortcomings. Furthermore, the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia last year under the Bangkok Treaty has been complemented this year by the Pelindaba Treaty establishing the continent of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

The international community has also benefitted greatly this year from the Advisory Opinion delivered by the International Court of Justice last July. In addressing the question put to it by the General Assembly:

> "Is the threat or use of nuclear weapons in any circumstance permitted under international law?" *(resolution 49/75 K, operative paragraph)*

the Court, *inter alia*, reached the unanimous conclusion that:

> "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". *(A/51/4, para. 182)*

Primary responsibility for this obligation rests with the nuclear-weapon States. It is common knowledge that despite the end of the cold war, as well as the realization of the indefinite extension of the NPT, and now the conclusion of the CTBT banning nuclear-weapon testing of an explosive nature, there are numerous nuclear weapons and means of delivery in the inventories of the nuclear-weapon States. There is, therefore, a possibility that these weapons could be subjected to qualitative improvements through non-explosive means not banned under the CTBT regime. Such an ominous development could fuel the nuclear arms race anew and consequently undermine the above-mentioned disarmament regimes.

Given this scenario, the imperative for general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control remains as valid as it was even before the end of the cold war. It is for this reason that a plan of action within a specific time-frame is required, within which an end to the manufacture of nuclear weapons and the eradication of all existing nuclear arsenals and their delivery systems can be realized. Such a time-frame was presented by the Group of 21 of the Conference on Disarmament during the CTBT negotiations. Regrettably, it did not meet with the support of nuclear-weapon States. In fact, as we have been given to understand, it was not even accepted for discussion by the nuclear-weapon States.

My delegation wishes to reaffirm the view commonly held by the members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries that a phased programme, with agreed time-frames, to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world by the year 2020 is the only meaningful way of conclusively tackling the issue of nuclear disarmament. It underscores the Movement's unremitting drive for early attainment of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

What this means is that, with the removal of the CTBT from its agenda, the Conference on Disarmament

should move expeditiously to begin negotiations on the eradication of nuclear weapons. To this end, my delegation supports the need for a treaty banning all nuclear weapons completely. We therefore call for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament to initiate negotiations on the elimination for all time of all nuclear weapons.

My delegation also supports the call made by some of the preceding speakers that negotiations for a fissile material cut-off treaty should begin early next year in the Conference on Disarmament. This calls for the re-establishment of an ad hoc cut-off committee in the Conference on Disarmament.

A "fissban" also becomes all the more urgent because there are excessive stocks of weapons-grade uranium and plutonium, so that the possibility of these stocks falling into the wrong hands, for instance through theft, is extremely high. Because of these excessive stocks, it is crystal clear that a cut-off is no longer a disarmament measure, as was originally intended. It is, to all intents and purposes, a collateral disarmament measure or a non-proliferation measure if you will. If realized, it would go a long way in consolidating the gains and accelerating the drive towards a nuclear-weapon-free world that we should all aim to achieve by the year 2020, as embodied in the Programme of Action for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons presented to the Conference on Disarmament by the members of the Group of 21.

Furthermore, non-nuclear-weapon States have always honoured their obligations under the NPT, and the overwhelming majority of them in the southern hemisphere also bear these obligations under their respective nuclear-weapon-free zones. These States are, at this fifty-first session of the General Assembly, energetically working on a resolution, under the leadership of Brazil, on a "Nuclear-weapon-free southern African hemisphere and adjacent areas".

The least these States have always asked from the nuclear-weapon States is to given binding security assurances. My delegation, therefore, calls upon the Conference on Disarmament to begin negotiations without delay in the coming year on both positive and negative security guarantees for non-nuclear-weapon States. Nuclear-weapon States must undertake, through a treaty, that they will not be the first to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons; that they will not use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States; and that, as nuclear-weapon States, they will come to the aid of any non-nuclear-weapon State if it comes under attack or is threatened with a nuclear weapons attack.

The international community has made giant strides in the field of disarmament since the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament held in 1988. However, a lot remains to be done. One such development to be accomplished is to hold the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, otherwise known as SSOD-IV, in 1999. SSOD-IV should be able to assess progress made in the field of disarmament thus far, and to chart a new course in the area of disarmament for the twenty-first century. To this end, we support the calls that have been made in this Committee for the preparatory committee to commence work in early 1997 to prepare for SSOD-IV. Consensus on this matter will signify our collective commitment to the twin objectives of non-proliferation and total nuclear disarmament to which we all avidly aspire.

Zambia has always maintained the view that concern for total nuclear disarmament should not in any way overshadow the international community's equal concern for conventional armaments. Conventional arms are in constant use in various conflicts around the globe. Lives continue to be lost and property continues to be destroyed in wanton fashion in conflicts, many of which occur within States and are fuelled by ethnic rivalries. This is particularly disturbing in Africa where conflicts affect so many countries, as evidenced by fratricidal conflicts in Angola, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia and Liberia, while Western Sahara still remains under foreign domination.

Of particular concern in the area of conventional arms is the issue of small arms and light weapons, including landmines. For some developing countries, these weapons have indeed become instruments of choice which are used to sustain conflicts within States. The continent of Africa has been particularly affected by the phenomenal use of small and light weapons. The above catalogue of conflicts in Africa underscores the imperative need to look critically at the issue of controlling the flow of such weapons to the areas of conflict.

Today, more than ever before, the widespread use of landmines is one of the most critical challenges facing the international community. With an estimated 110 million or so landmines littered all over the globe, particularly in 64 affected countries, these weapons continue to wreak havoc, killing and maiming scores of thousands of people every year, long after conflicts have ceased. Most of the victims

are innocent civilians. Landmines have become the weapon of choice in the poor countries because they are cheap and easy to manufacture and use; and yet they are difficult to detect, and expensive and dangerous to remove. In the process, they inhibit the return of refugees and disrupt economic reconstruction. They have also become a major impediment to peacekeeping operations wherever these operations have been mounted.

In these circumstances, my delegation calls for an intensification of demining efforts worldwide. It also wishes to applaud those countries that have joined the export moratoria on landmines. More importantly, we call upon the international community to conclude an international agreement banning the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. Zambia, therefore, joins other like-minded delegations at this regular session of the fifty-first General Assembly in supporting a draft resolution urging States to begin work on negotiating an international agreement to achieve a global ban on landmines.

Mr. Obadi (Yemen) (*interpretation from Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Yemen, I would like to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee at this General Assembly session. I wish also to take this opportunity to express my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau on their election.

The issue of comprehensive and complete disarmament is one of the most important issues before the international community. Indeed, there is no alternative facing humanity in our world during this era other than the total elimination of these destructive and deadly weapons. Therefore, from this premise, attention has been focused on this issue, and many efforts have been made during the past few years in order to achieve some important and positive results in the field of disarmament and nuclear-arms control — and indeed they have been achieved.

Decisions have been taken that led to the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to the creation of nuclear-free zones in South-East Asia, in Africa, in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the Pacific.

The Advisory Opinion issued by the International Court of Justice concerning the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, and the decision by the Disarmament Commission last May concerning the guidelines on the international transfer of weapons, as well as the recent adoption by the General Assembly of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), are all positive results. Yemen was among the countries that sponsored the resolution concerning the CTBT. Our Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister signed the Treaty during the present session of the General Assembly.

These latest achievements should lead Governments and the United Nations to play an important and essential role in promoting solutions to other outstanding disarmament issues. We should provide for all ways and means of strengthening peace and security in various parts of the world, and we should endeavour to attain the objectives of complete and comprehensive disarmament.

The main efforts and initiatives in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world will strengthen the NPT system and thereby strengthen international peace and security. They will also lead to confidence-building among countries and peoples that have suffered from armed conflict. We believe that all of these efforts will lead to a commitment to the total elimination of nuclear weapons in conflict areas. In this regard we wish to reaffirm our support for the efforts being made in this area and to the General Assembly resolutions related to the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

These resolutions call upon — in fact, urge — all the parties directly concerned to consider seriously taking the practical and urgent steps required to implement the proposal for the establishment of a nuclear-free-zone in the Middle East, and stress the importance of all concerned countries adhering to the NPT.

We wish to welcome the accession of the United Arab Emirates and Djibouti to the NPT. We also welcome the statement of the Foreign Minister of Oman in the General Assembly on 1 October 1996 concerning his country's wish to sign the Treaty. At the same time, we wish to express our concern in view of the persistent risk emanating from the Israeli nuclear programme, which remains outside the international system of the NPT. We are also concerned about Israel's refusal to join the NPT and the efforts to force the other Middle East countries, with the exception of Israel, to accede to the NPT. We believe that it is extremely important to call on Israel to join the NPT as a step towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and towards ridding the area of all types of weapons of mass destruction.

A comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East should be linked to security and stability through

mutual commitments — equal commitments — by all parties in the area to make it nuclear-free and free of weapons of mass destruction.

My country fully welcomes the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice with regard to the legitimacy or otherwise of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. This Advisory Opinion, which was delivered on 8 July 1996 in response to General Assembly resolution 75 K, is a major development in the field of disarmament because it also expresses the position of international law on the illegality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. It is indeed a positive contribution by the Court towards achieving complete disarmament.

The Republic of Yemen, in view of its geographical position on the Indian Ocean, pays great attention to any effort aimed at enhancing cooperation among the countries of that Ocean. Accordingly, it participated in the latest meeting, held in Mauritius, to complete preparations for a draft charter and special work programme with regard to cooperation among countries of the Indian Ocean. On this occasion, we wish to express our satisfaction at the efforts being made by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean to achieve a zone of peace and all the discussions taking place that focus on practical measures to prepare for a situation of peace, security and stability in the area.

We call on the permanent members of the Security Council and the maritime users of the Indian Ocean to join in promoting the activities of the Committee in order to strengthen peace, security, stability and cooperation in the area in the light of the General Assembly's resolutions.

The problem of landmines in some countries of the world have not been completely resolved. It is a problem that worries these countries and the international community. This remains a major issue with far-reaching dimensions on the human level. It destroys people, land and resources. We wish to commend the increasing efforts being made by the international community to eliminate such landmines in many countries, including our own.

In the Republic of Yemen, we are still suffering from the presence of landmines as a result of the separatist war of May 1994. We wish to emphasize that it is extremely important to take more practical and advanced measures to clear landmines, which affect large sections of the population and hamper the process of rehabilitation and development. At the same time, we wish to thank the United Nations, friendly Governments and the European Union for their support and assistance in clearing landmines. However, we are seeking more financial, technical and other types of assistance to clear landmines and we need training to be able to carry out our tasks.

We fully support the holding of a fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament. We believe that this session might lay the ground for the future in the field of disarmament and security. We hope that during its fifty-first session the General Assembly will adopt a specific resolution fixing the date of the fourth special session. We believe that the results of such a session would be a means of preparing for the Review Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Finally, my delegation wishes to confirm the importance of further efforts by Governments and the United Nations in the field of disarmament. We should indeed resolve all the outstanding issues by applying to the political will and determination, without selectivity, for many of the issues related to nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction remain to be resolved and settled.

The Chairman: I now call on Mr. Ian Kenyon, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Mr. Kenyon (Preparatory Commission for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons): It gives me great pleasure to have this opportunity once again to report to this Committee on progress towards implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction — one of the most ambitious multilateral agreements in the history of arms limitation and disarmament. Nearly four years ago, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 47/39 by consensus, requesting the Secretary-General, as depository of this Convention, to open it for signature in Paris on 13 January 1993, and calling upon all States to become parties at the earliest possible date, thus contributing to its rapid entry into force and the early achievement of universal adherence.

Since February 1993, a Preparatory Commission, established in The Hague by the signatory States through the adoption of the "Paris resolution" during the signing ceremony in Paris, has continued tackling the twin tasks of working out the detailed procedures for implementation and setting up the infrastructure for the future Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Today, 160 States have signed the Convention, a relatively high number

for any multilateral disarmament agreement, and the number of ratifications has reached 64 — just one short of the figure of 65 required for triggering the implementation of the Convention six months later.

A number of signatory States have made use of the longer than expected preparatory phase to carry out the necessary domestic preparations, and many more are expected to complete their ratification procedures in the near future. The list of ratifiers includes a number of States with a significant chemical industry. The situation, however, is still far from ideal, with continuing uncertainty regarding the ratification timetable in the United States and the Russian Federation — the two largest possessors of chemical weapons and, incidentally, ardent supporters of the Convention both during the negotiating phase and in the preparatory phase. There is now a real prospect of the entry into force of the Convention without these two States. Given the stockpile of nearly 71,000 tons of chemical weapons between them, their leadership role in world affairs, and the technical expertise available in both these States for a successful implementation of the Convention, the other member States naturally await their ratifications with anxiety.

Despite the uncertainty regarding the number and composition of States parties when the Convention enters into force, the Preparatory Commission meeting in The Hague has, over the past year, developed a number of additional procedures for implementation which, together with those worked out earlier, have laid the foundation for a reliable infrastructure for the OPCW, its staff structure and financial and administrative rules, as well as the modalities of inspections which will form an important part of the future verification activities to be undertaken under the Convention. Without going into too much detail, I would like specifically to mention the following.

With regard to inspection procedures and policies, the Preparatory Commission has worked out a number of detailed provisions for declarations and inspections, and has adopted draft policies on confidentiality, as well as media and public affairs, for the future organization, all of which will also help during the conduct of inspections. The Secretariat is currently drafting a number of documents based on the decisions taken in the Commission which will form the basis of the inspection effort of the OPCW.

These include the preparation of a draft inspection manual, health and safety guidelines, and a declaration handbook for declared facilities. Industry declaration forms and a notification handbook are now nearly complete and have been sent out in draft form to Member States so that they may apply them to their domestic situations. Inspections of certain types of facilities will be backed up by facility agreements, and efforts are on hand to develop model agreements for this purpose. Logistics and communication workshops have been held to consider the practical aspects of conducting inspections and facilitating the submission of declarations to the future technical secretariat and other communications between the OPCW and future States parties.

With regard to inspection workload, based on estimates of the number of declarable military and industrial facilities provided to the secretariat on a purely confidential basis, the secretariat has now revised its estimates of facilities which will require inspections. About 400 inspections are currently planned in the first year after entry into force of the Convention. The secretariat has been involved with several demonstration inspections conducted by member States in order to fine-tune the inspection procedures based on practical experience. In addition, several member States have organized a number of table-top exercises focusing on the development of facility agreements for Schedule 2 and 3 facilities under the Convention. Another such exercise in relation to a Schedule 1 facility will take place in November.

With regard to equipment, procurement of the necessary inspection equipment to be used initially for training of future inspectors of the organization has been undertaken. Equipment required for undertaking the full inspection programme by the OPCW has been identified and initial quantities will be purchased once 65 States deposit their instruments of ratification.

With regard to technical support, the OPCW laboratory and equipment store was inaugurated on 11 September in Rijswijk, which borders The Hague. A cooperative evaluation of the inspection equipment procured initially for training purposes has also been carried out in order to determine the suitability of this equipment during the actual conduct of inspections. Inter-laboratory proficiency tests involving a number of laboratories in different parts of the world are under way. This will enable the organization to accredit a small number of laboratories throughout the world, which meet the OPCW analytical standards, thus creating a worldwide network upon entry into force of the Convention.

As regards training, the recruitment and training effort for the inspectorate of the future OPCW is of special significance for the conduct of safe and efficient inspections

with minimum intrusion and minimal risk of compromise of business information. A 20-week training scheme for inspector trainees consisting of three main modules has been designed, and the practical training arrangements from course material to training facilities and equipment have almost been completed. Training will take place in China, the Czech Republic, France, Finland, Germany, India, Japan, the Netherlands, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Slovak Republic, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States and possibly in some additional locations. On present plans, 140 inspectors will be recruited by the time the Convention enters into force and another 71 will be recruited six months later. A total of 240 trainees will be trained in two groups of 160 and 80 respectively. Interviews for future inspectors, starting in mid-1995, have been largely completed in The Hague and in various centres around the world. For the first group, candidates from about 60 countries have already been selected for training. Efforts are under way for completing selection for the second group, for which more than 50 candidates have already been identified. The trainees will be appointed in the technical secretariat of the OPCW if they successfully complete the training course, pass the necessary medical and language tests, and naturally, if their countries ratify the Convention.

With regard to the OPCW infrastructure, progress in setting up the infrastructure for the future organization has been steady. Currently, about 120 staff members representing nearly 50 nationalities are working at the provisional technical secretariat. Work is in progress on setting up a secure information management system, which will not only help in the effective collection, storage and evaluation of information related to verification activities but will also ensure the confidentiality of commercially sensitive industrial and other data from all States parties.

The minimum requirements in this regard are expected to be in place by the end of this year. The construction of a new headquarters building for the OPCW in The Hague started on 9 May this year and is expected to be completed by the beginning of 1998. The OPCW headquarters agreement with the host State, the Netherlands, is currently being negotiated. Having worked out the financial regulations for the OPCW, the Commission has turned its attention to framing the relevant staff regulations. The budget for the first full year of operations of the OPCW will be considered shortly. Preliminary proposals by the secretariat suggest that this will be in the region of $100 million to support the activities of roughly 500 staff members.

The stage of theoretical preparations is thus already complete and a new phase of real investment in terms of time, finances and personnel in the infrastructure of the future organization is about to begin. Future implementation of the Convention, however, is not without its own pitfalls and difficulties. At the very outset of its work, the Preparatory Commission had adopted several assumptions. One of these is the assumption that the two largest possessors of chemical weapons — the United States and the Russian Federation — would be among the first 65 ratifiers. The much expected positive vote in the United States Senate on advice and consent for ratification of the Convention by 14 September has failed to materialize. However, President Clinton, speaking before the General Assembly, stated:

> "I deeply regret that the United States Senate has not yet voted on the Convention, but I want to assure you and people throughout the world that I will not let this treaty die". *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 6th meeting, p. 2)*

These were encouraging words, but for now, the matter of ratification by the United States must await more propitious times. The Russian Federation has made progress in putting together a comprehensive programme for destruction of its chemical weapons stockpile, including the identification of destruction sites, the technology needed for destruction, protection of the environment, the agencies responsible and the overall financial requirements, which has been approved by President Yeltsin. A draft law, which will establish the legal framework for destruction, has received its first hearing in the Duma. We have been assured that the Convention will be submitted by the Government to the Duma for ratification in the near future. There is yet, however, no clear timetable for the consent to ratification by that body.

The extent of resources required for meeting the Convention's requirements on destruction by these two chemical- weapon possessor States within a 10-year period is enormous. In the Russian Federation, the draft destruction plan for an estimated 40,000 tons of chemical weapons is expected to cost approximately 16.6 trillion roubles ($3.68 billion). Given other priorities, these resources are obviously hard to come by. According to the United States Department of Defense, the total amount of chemical weapons currently present in that country is a little over 31,600 tons and the destruction costs for these stocks will be approximately $12 billion. The destruction of chemical weapons in the United States has been under way

at Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean since June 1991. I am happy to note the first chemical weapons destruction facility in the continental United States located at Tooele, Utah, which I was fortunate to visit a few months ago, began incinerating chemical weapons on 22 August. It can therefore be said with some confidence that the destruction programme in the United States, which needs to destroy its entire stockpile of chemical weapons by 2004 under a 1985 Congressional law, is more or less on track.

An added possible source of concern among Member States is the fact that the 1990 bilateral Agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation on Destruction and Non-Production of Chemical Weapons is not yet in force. This puts into question another basic assumption of the Commission — namely, that this Agreement would be in force and in the process of implementation at entry into force of the Convention. This would allow the OPCW to limit verification by the organization to measures complementary to those being carried out under this bilateral Agreement. Essentially, this would mean that the OPCW would not itself have to engage in verification of destruction, but would only send observers with the national teams of these two States, which would inspect each other. If the Agreement is not being implemented at entry into force, the number of OPCW inspectorate staff required will increase.

Earlier this month, the Secretariat undertook a detailed analysis of additional resources required for implementing the Convention in the absence of the bilateral Agreement on Destruction and Non-Production of Chemical Weapons between the two States. This analysis indicates that the probable additional costs of employing up to 70 additional inspectors, procurement of additional inspection equipment and conducting inspections on a larger scale would be of the order of $18 million.

At the national level, preparing for the implementation of the Convention involves, among other things, establishing or designating a viable national authority that will liaise with the future OPCW, enacting the necessary legislation, establishing a database system for processing and filing declarations, training national escorts for the verification activities under the Convention, and, last but not least, undertaking an extensive education programme for the industry. The secretariat, for its part, has been engaged in the dissemination of relevant information on the Convention and the Preparatory Commission through various means: written contributions, setting up an outreach group for industry, and participating, when resources permit, in national events related to the implementation of the Convention.

Seventeen regional seminars and five courses for personnel of national authorities have been organized so far. Two more courses for personnel of national authorities — one for South America and the Caribbean, to take place in the Netherlands Antilles, and one largely for African member countries, to take place in Tanzania — are planned for later this year. However, the ultimate responsibility for national preparations lies with Member States themselves. Despite many efforts, little has been heard about domestic preparations in a number of signatory States. This state of affairs will need to be rectified before the entry into force of the Convention.

The Preparatory Commission itself faces a number of unfinished tasks in the immediate future. It still has to agree, for example, on some declaration issues related to the chemical industry and chemical weapons facilities, verification measures to be applied to inspections of chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities converted to civilian use, as well as old and abandoned chemical weapons sites. The issue of the timing of harmonizing export controls in the light of the economic and technological development provisions of the Convention awaits resolution.

The new headquarters building for the OPCW will be ready by the beginning of 1998, and suitable interim accommodation will have to be found for the expanded staff of the secretariat if the Convention, as expected, enters into force in the first half of 1997. Political understanding will be needed before the first session of the Conference of the States Parties on issues such as the composition of the Executive Council and the top management structure of the OPCW. Detailed arrangements for the first session of the Conference of the States Parties will need to be finalized before the entry into force of the Convention.

It is not surprising that in the current period of relative uncertainly regarding the future implementation of the Convention, some critics have once again started questioning the ability of the Convention to verify effectively the destruction of existing chemical weapons and prevent future proliferation. It has been further argued that the Convention is not, and will not be, universal, and that in any event it places an unacceptable burden on chemical industry and creates an unwieldy bureaucracy. The facts do not bear out these concerns. It is true that the Convention cannot guarantee with finality that chemical weapons will not be produced or used by States that are bent upon

cheating, or by terrorists. What the Convention will do is create a system that makes that extremely difficult as a practical matter, because of its system of monitoring sensitive chemicals, its challenge inspection provisions, its economic and political sanctions, and by creating a forum for determining collective action to combat the threat of chemical weapons. But just as importantly, the Convention will help build the norm against the use of chemical weapons so as to make that option, even if it is militarily possible, politically unacceptable.

It is these provisions that will help make the Convention more universal as time goes on. The overwhelming majority of States have already committed themselves to undertake obligations under the Convention and, as it starts to be implemented, the economic sanctions, together with the political unacceptability of resorting to the use of chemical weapons, will persuade those outside the regime to work within the system. Chemical industry, as it has learnt about the Convention and how it will work, is already persuaded of this, and the support from this sector all over the world bears this out. The careful balance in the Convention between vigilance, the need to protect confidential information and not to create unnecessary burdens recognizes the importance of this support.

Similarly, claims that the Convention will create an unwieldy bureaucracy are not justified. Based on previous experience, member States closely involved in the preparations have worked hard to create a lean and efficient secretariat, which will be staffed by highly qualified professionals and will build on existing experience and technical expertise. Some 70 per cent of the staff recruited for the technical secretariat of the OPCW will be directly involved in verification activities.

Many States all over the world have already looked closely at these issues, and have come to the conclusion that ratifying the Convention would contribute not only to their own security, but also to international security. There is no other alternative. Without the Convention in force, the world will continue to face risk from chemical weapons, the danger of proliferation of such weapons will continue and even multiply, and a disastrous precedent will be set for similar multilateral agreements negotiated for other weapon systems. I consider it important, therefore, to convey the same message to this Committee as last year: every effort should be made to maintain the political momentum towards the early entry into force of the Convention, its full implementation, and early achievement of universal membership. This includes continued efforts to ensure that the United States, the Russian Federation and other remaining signatory States ratify the Convention at the earliest possible date and to work collectively towards our shared goal of eliminating the threat from this abhorrent category of weapons. I have no doubt that member States will demonstrate the necessary political will and dexterity to bring this Convention into force in a successful manner. Failure to do so will mean forgoing the opportunity of bringing into force a powerful legal instrument against an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Ali-Bakhit (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Since this is my first statement at this session, I wish on behalf of the delegation of Sudan to congratulate you most sincerely, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of this Committee. We also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their elections. Rest assured of my delegation's cooperation in achieving the international disarmament goals of this Committee.

The United Nations Charter is based in spirit and letter on the maintenance of international peace and security, and the peaceful settlement of disputes through negotiation, mediation and arbitration. In this context, this decade has witnessed important developments towards banning weapons of mass destruction. A number of conventions have been concluded that make many areas of the world nuclear-weapon-free zones. Recently, the General Assembly, at its fiftieth session, adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which will halt the nuclear arms race and prohibit the manufacture of nuclear weapons, given political will and good intentions.

Disarmament, as we all know, is a desire that all States expressed at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978. The Non-Aligned Movement has continued to take every opportunity to express this desire. The rising chorus of voices of the Non-Aligned Movement and of many other States throughout the world during the first month of the present session calling for complete disarmament, are still ringing in our ears.

Despite the interest of my country and of the international community in stemming the danger of nuclear weapons, we are duty-bound also to face the danger of conventional weapons, which fan the flames of conflict, shed blood, squander resources and impede development. A number of speakers have noted that a few States produce and export these weapons, igniting conflicts and causing destabilization. What is transpiring in the southern part of my country is a case in point: several parties are supplying

the rebel movement with weapons that destroy people and resources. This encourages the perpetuation of the culture of war, with all its adverse consequences.

It is known that one third of the world's anti-personnel and anti-tank mines are to be found on the continent of Africa, amounting to 30 million of the 110 million mines in the world. I need not touch here on the danger and impact of these mines on human safety or on their role in impeding development. In this context, we support the implementation of the final document of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the conventional weapons Convention, which took place earlier this year. It called upon the States that deployed these mines to help clear them and to provide material and technical assistance and information. In this context, I cannot fail to commend the important role played by the Canadian Government in addressing the problem of mines. We would like to express our full support for these efforts.

My country is suffering from the threat of mines, 1 million of which have been placed by the rebel movement. The mines continue to threaten peace and development, even in areas — such as in the southern part of the country — where stability has been restored. Thus my country calls on the international community to provide support and technical and material assistance to remove these mines. It calls upon the States that supply the rebels with mines to desist, with a view to preserving the safety of innocent citizens in the region.

The International Court of Justice advisory opinion issued in July of this year on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons was viewed with respect and appreciation by all States. It stressed unequivocally the need to pursue endeavours to achieve nuclear disarmament under effective international control. That advisory opinion revived hope in nuclear disarmament. However, if we look at the situation in the Middle East, we see that it is frightening for two reasons. The first is Israel's advanced nuclear programme not subject to the comprehensive regime of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. The second is Israel's refusal to make the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone and its refusal to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). This threatens the safety of its neighbours and all States of the Middle East region. It is the only State in the region that has not signed that Treaty.

We are confident, Mr. Chairman, that you share the ideas and concerns which we have just outlined. I wish finally to express our support for the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We hope that the Committee will adopt this as one of its recommendations. We reaffirm our delegation's readiness to cooperate and to participate in discussing all items on the agenda of the First Committee and in adopting acceptable draft resolutions on them.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): Since this is the first time that I am addressing the Committee under your chairmanship, Sir, let me congratulate you and other members of the Bureau on your election. I have no doubt that your competence and high diplomatic skills will guide us well during the deliberations of this very important Committee. I assure you of the support of my delegation.

Today, despite the end of the cold war and the profound changes that have taken place, we still live in a climate of potentially destabilising uncertainty, characterised by mistrust among nations. In this situation, weapons of mass destruction, if not curbed, will no doubt contribute to global instability in terms of human anguish.

Despite the fact that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) does not address all aspects of nuclear disarmament, Namibia has signed it, because we believe that the Treaty demonstrates the international community's willingness to halt the spread of nuclear weapons.

In this connection, my delegation welcomes the Proposal for a Programme of Action for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, submitted by the Group of 21 non-aligned members to the Conference on Disarmament, which calls for the phased elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2020. Namibia believes that once the nightmare of nuclear weapons is removed from this world, humankind can live in peace and harmony.

The Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons of 8 July 1996 has established that the use of nuclear weapons is contrary to international law and that their use could bring untold suffering to human beings and destroy the ecosystems of the planet, as well as civilization.

The most significant developments towards disarmament have been realized with the successful establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zones in Latin America under the Treaty of Tlatelolco; in the South Pacific under the Treaty of Rarotonga; in Africa under the Pelindaba Treaty, and under the Treaty of Bangkok in South-East Asia, which in essence make the southern hemisphere and its adjacent areas a nuclear-free area. These

developments are positive and should not go unnoticed by the nuclear-weapon States, but rather should be seen as a yardstick of the overwhelming desire of the majority of the world not to live with the nuclear menace.

The Foreign Minister of Namibia, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, had this to say when he addressed the General Assembly at its fifty-first session on the notion that nuclear weapons assure world peace:

> "I shall never be convinced, and I shall never succumb to the notion, that nuclear weapons assure world peace and security, development, prosperity or equality among nations. On the contrary, I am convinced that peace, disarmament, democracy, multilateral cooperation and resource allocation can unleash human ingenuity and industry for development and social progress." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings,* 14th meeting, p. 41)

Therefore, nuclear disarmament should not be seen as a weak point on the part of nuclear-weapon States, but rather as a contributing factor to international peace and security.

Namibia, like many other countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, is faced with the menace of anti-personnel landmines, which have killed or maimed many innocent civilians. The Southern African Development Community and the European Union have been cooperating in the area of mine clearance in the countries affected by that menace in our region. We urge those countries that produce anti-personnel landmines to ban the production of these deadly weapons and to assist countries that have suffered and continue to suffer the ravages of war and landmines.

In this regard, we support the ongoing initiatives aimed at banning anti-personnel landmines as well as the commendable work that some countries are doing in the field of demining. We should all therefore work together in this respect. Namibia thus welcomes international efforts to ban anti-personnel landmines through a legally binding instrument.

Mr. Al-Hassan (Oman) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation agrees fully with those who have spoken favourably of this year's unique achievements in the field of nuclear disarmament and the United Nations. In fact, with the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in September and the issuance of an Advisory Opinion by the International Court of Justice on 8 July ruling that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law and reaffirming States' legal obligations to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament, my delegation believes that a further step has been taken by the international community towards achieving the noble goals and objectives laid down at the United Nations creation 50 years ago.

At the same time, we call on the international community to intensify efforts to conclude of a global nuclear-weapons convention providing for the complete prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons, in accordance with the provisions of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and with the good faith urged in the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion.

It is no secret that disarmament in all its aspects remains the main focus of the international community. While, as we know, the cold war is over, our mission to achieve international peace and security is not yet complete. Based on these developments, we in the Sultanate of Oman agree that nuclear weapons still pose the greatest threat to international peace and security. Consequently, we share the conviction that the international community should focus more intensely than ever in the future on the complete elimination of these weapons through national and international efforts.

One way of doing that, from our perspective, is to work candidly and in a truly non-discriminatory manner towards universal adherence to the non-proliferation regime. That is precisely what my country did this year in announcing on 1 October before the General Assembly its decision to sign the NPT. At the same time, we hope that other States, particularly those of the Middle East that have not yet signed the NPT will accede to it. That would enhance confidence-building measures.

It has been no surprise that my country has in past years supported the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Our support for this proposal does not stem from sentiment; it is based on realities. Such a zone could only enhance the peace process. We should also like to emphasize that the elimination of nuclear weapons in the Middle East through the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone would not adversely affect the security of any State; on the contrary it would nourish and strengthen the security of all States. It is high time that we abandon the rhetoric on the unique situation of a specific State that

is based on an inaccurate perception of regional security. Security is a very important priority; to be effective, it must be comprehensive and based on good and real intentions. Therefore, we call on Israel, the only State in the region not Party to the NPT and that has not placed its nuclear facilities under international safeguards, to take these steps.

The Sultanate of Oman believes that the Chemical Weapons Convention is very important because it preserves international peace and security and therefore signed and became the first State in the Middle East to ratify it. While we welcome the early signing of the Convention by 64 States, we hope that its entry into force will begin soon and be accompanied by practical political steps to guarantee its universal nature and strengthen its role in the maintenance of international peace and security. In this context, my delegation welcomes the statements of chemical-weapon States, particularly regarding the measures taken through their national constitutional bodies to implement the Convention.

Among other international treaties to which we have acceded is the Biological Weapons Convention. While we welcome the accession of approximately 138 nations to this Convention, we hope that other States will become Parties, given the importance of this instrument in curbing all weapons of mass destruction. In this context, while my delegation welcomes the Final Declaration of the Third Review Conference, it looks forward to fruitful discussion on ensuring the successful conclusion of the Fourth Review Conference to be held in November.

The Indian Ocean is a vital transit route for my country; as a member of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean, we have done our best to help the Committee implement its mandate. While we welcome the meagre progress achieved, we are disappointed at the position adopted by some States vis-à-vis the Committee and its work. Given the favourable international climate, we believe it is time to reconsider the mandate and the work of that Committee and to consider steps to transform the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace.

My delegation concurs fully with the views of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by anti-personnel landmines, which kill many innocent civilians throughout the world. My country, the Sultanate of Oman, believes that the only way to address that problem is to make concerted international efforts to halt the acquisition and production of these mines, without exception.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to express to you, Sir, and to all members of the Committee its readiness to work closely with the Committee to achieve our shared noble goals and to make this session a special one on the road to disarmament by exploiting the positive international atmosphere and overcoming the real challenges before us. Among the many and daunting challenges that the international community must carefully consider are the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the translation into reality of the ambition of the peoples and countries of the Middle East to make the Middle East a zone free of all nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction.

The Chairman: I call on the Secretary of the Committee.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): As representatives are aware, the deadline for submission of draft resolutions on disarmament and international security agenda items will be next Tuesday, 29 October at 6 p.m. In this connection, I should like to inform members of the First Committee of the following:

In view of the current financial situation of the Organization, and in accordance with the decision of the Efficiency Board, no note verbale of the Secretary-General will be sent out to Member States next year with respect to those resolutions that request the Secretary-General to submit reports to the General Assembly, including those containing views or comments on specific subjects. Therefore, in order to facilitate the preparation of those reports by the Secretariat, those draft resolutions that request the Secretary-General to submit reports to the General Assembly should contain a standard provision, as follows:

> "Requests Member States" or "all States" or "States in the region" — depending on the circumstances — "to communicate to the Secretary-General their views or comments on the subject no later than 15 April 1997."

As a matter of fact, this formulation already exists in resolutions regarding the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, the Biological Weapons Convention and the standardized reporting system of military expenditures. Should concerned delegations so request, the Secretariat would be quite happy to assist in finalizing this specific provision in the draft resolution.

The Chairman: The Committee takes note of the Secretary's statement.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.